

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 CA-01 HA-05 /067 W

-----019510 011908Z /43

R 011215Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5769

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

AMEMBASSY PORT OF PRINCE

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE GEORGETOWN 3086

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SCUL, OCON, GY

SUBJECT: CARIBBEAN CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES MEETS IN GEORGETOWN

SUMMARY: THE CARIBBEAN CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES MET FOR ITS SECOND QUADRENNIAL CONFERENCE IN GEORGETOWN FROM NOV. 16-23, BECAME ENMESHED IN GUYANA'S DOMESTIC POLITICS AND LEFT TOWN WITHOUT HAVING SET A CLEAR DIRECTION FOR THE ORGANIZATION'S FUTURE.

1. THE SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CARIBBEAN CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES (CCC) MET IN GEORGETOWN NOV. 16 THROUGH 23. OVER 400 DELEGATES FROM 57 COUNTRIES GATHERED FOR THE ASSEMBLY WHICH FOCUSED ON A VARIETY OF ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE CARIBBEAN. TOPICS INCLUDED THE PURPOSE OF RELIGION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS, RACISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS.

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2. THE CCC MEETING WAS OFFICIALLY OPENED BY PRIME MINISTER FORBES BURNHAM WHO IN HIS WELCOMING ADDRESS URGED THAT THE CHURCH LEADERS CAST OFF TIES TO THE "OLD ORDER" AND "JOIN WITH THE POOR CLAMANT MULTITUDE." HE NOTED THE CLOSER INVOLVEMENT OF RELIGION IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES OF THE DAY, COMMENTING PARTICULARLY ON RECENT CHURCH POSITIONS IN FAVOR OF FULL EMPLOYMENT

AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE. BURNHAM THEN WENT ON TO REITERATE A HUMAN RIGHTS THEME HE HAS BEEN SOUNDING RECENTLY TO THE EFFECT THAT THROUGH THE RIGHTS OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND FREE ELECTIONS WERE IMPORTANT IN THEMSELVES THEY WERE INSUFFICIENT : "WHAT WAS THE SENSE OF TELLING A HUNGRY MAN THAT HE SHOULD ENJOY THE RIGHT OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH? JUST TO TALK ABOUT HIS HUNGER?" HE CRITICIZED THOSE WHO EMPHASIZED A "NARROW BUNDLE" OF LEGAL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS AND IMPLIED THAT ECONOMIC ONES WERE OR LITTLE OR NO CONSEQUENCES.

3. DURING ITS WEEK OF MEETINGS THE CCC WAS HEAVILY PROPAGANDIZED BY CHEDDI JAGAN'S MARXIST-ORIENTED PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY WHICH EMPLOYED PICKETS AND SYMPATHIZERS WITHIN SOME OF THE DELEGATIONS IN AN EFFORT TO BRING THE CONFERENCE AROUND TO TAKING A STAND CRITICAL OF THE GUYANESE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE THREE MONTHS OLD SUGAR WORKERS STRIKE. FINALLY, ON THE LAST DAY OF THE CONFERENCE (IN FACT, IN THE SMALL HOURS OF NOV. 24 LONG AFTER IT WAS TO HAVE OFFICIALLY CLOSED) TWO RESOLUTIONS RELEVANT TO GUYANA WERE ADOPTED BY THE CCC, ONE OF WHICH FIRMLY CRITICIZED GUYANA FOR ITS USE OF STRIKE-BREAKERS IN THE SUGAR STRIKE WHILE THE OTHER TOOK THE GOG TO TASK FOR ITS REFUSAL TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF RADICAL PROFESSOR DR. WALTER RODNEY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GUYANA.

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4. THE GOG WAS OBVIOUSLY HIGHLY IRRITATED BY THE TWO RESOLUTIONS. THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, KIT NASCIMENTO, CHARACTERIZED THEIR ADOPTION AS INTER-FERENCE IN THE POLITICAL AFFAIRS OF GUYANA AND HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE CCC'S ACTION WAS "DANGEROUS AND DISTASTEFUL AND PREJUDICIAL." SEVERAL GUYANESE CHURCH LEADERS ALSO HAVE SPOKEN OUT CRITICALLY OF THE CCC'S PERFORMANCE INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT OF THE GUYANA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, DR. HEWLEY HINDS.

5. COMMENT: IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE DICE WERE LOADED AGAINST THE GOG WITHIN THE CCC FROM THE BEGINNING. CERTAIN CHURCH ACTIVISTS WHO HAVE BEEN PROVIDING BOTH MATERIAL AND MORAL SUPPORT TO THE STRIKERS WERE DELEGATES TO THE CCC. ONCE THE GOG REALIZED WHAT IT WAS UP AGAINST IT ATTEMPTED TO "COUNTER PUNCH" BUT THE GAME WAS PROBABLY ALREADY LOST AT THAT STAGE. AS FAR AS THE CCC AND ITS FUTURE ARE CONCERNED MANY OF THE MORE SERIOUS DELEGATIONS WERE DISTRESSED AT PARTISAN EFFORTS TO POLITICIZE THE GROUP AND MANY WENT AWAY SAYING THAT SOME ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES WOULD HAVE

TO BE MADE BEFORE ITS NEXT MEETING. FROM THE POINT
OF VIEW OF U.S. INTERESTS THE LONG DRAWN-OUT DEBATE
OVER THE GUYANA RESOLUTIONS, WAS PROBABLY ADVANTAGEOUS;
IT LEFT THE CONFERENCE TOO TIRED TO CONSIDER A DRAFT
RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE RELEASE OF FOUR PUERTO RICANS
JAILED IN THE U.S. SINCE THE 1950S AND THE LABELING OF PUERTO
RICO AN "AMERICAN COLONY." THAT RESOLUTION WAS TURNED OVER TO
THE CONTINUATION COMMITTEE.
BURKE

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Disposition History: n/a
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